

Biden Cruises to Victory in South Carolina

February 4, 2024 **by Dan McCue**



Poll supervisors deliver their precincts' votes and related material to the Charleston County Board of Elections offices after the polls close.

(Photo by Dan McCue)

CHARLESTON, S.C. – President Joe Biden cruised to an overwhelming victory in the South Carolina primary Saturday, garnering 96.22% of the vote statewide in the first-in-the-South contest.

Only 4.09% of the state's 3.2 million registered voters participated in the election — the first vote of 2024 formally sanctioned by the Democratic National Committee — but there was no doubt those who did turn out were fervently pro-Biden.

Of the 131,870 votes cast, 126,321 went to the incumbent president, according to the South Carolina Elections Commission.

Perhaps the biggest surprise of the night was that self-help author Marianne Williamson, who bypassed the state completely after participating in New Hampshire's unsanctioned Democratic primary, came in second, defeating Rep. Dean Phillips, D-Minn., who had put in at least a token effort to campaign in the state.

Statewide, Williamson received the support of 2.06% of voters, garnering 2,726 votes; Phillips, meanwhile, was the choice of 1.71% of voters, receiving 2,239 votes.

The results across South Carolina's 46 counties were remarkably consistent. In rural Allendale County, the state's least populous county, 363 ballots were cast in a community with 4,565 registered voters. Of these, the lion's share, 350, went to Biden, while Williamson received seven votes and Phillips, three.

In Greenville, the state's most populous county, just 9.607 voters turned out in a community with 330,260 voters. Here again, Biden took almost everything — 9,067 votes, compared to Williamson's 283 votes and Phillip's 231.

In Charleston County, where The Well News spent the afternoon canvassing polling places, a total of 13,071 of the county's 258,008 registered voters participated in the primary election, with Biden getting 12,603 of those votes, Williamson, 237 and Phillips, 184.

Matt Dillane, a spokesman for the Charleston County Board of Elections, said Saturday night the low turnout was expected given the uncontested nature of the race.

In 2020, a year in which a total of 12 candidates actively competed in the primary, the statewide voter turnout was 16.36%. Biden, of course, won that contest receiving 48.65% of the vote, reviving his presidential hopes after less than stellar showings in Iowa and New Hampshire.

In 2016, the statewide turnout was 12.60% during a year when former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., were locked in a bitter and highly contentious contest.

Only two counties in the state saw more than 10% of their voters go to the polls, but they were telling.

Both Williamsburg County, which saw 12.28% of its 18,931 registered voters go to the polls, and Lee County, which had 10.03% of its 9,853 voters participate in the primary, are Black majority counties where African Americans make up over 60% of the population.

And in

Tomi Greene outside the Royal Missionary Baptist Church in North Charleston. (Photo by Dan McCue)

Williamsburg County, Biden did slightly better than the state average, with 97% of the county's vote going to him.

While it's true there were reports some polling places were not visited by any voters at all on Saturday, the overall results in these two counties and elsewhere appear to suggest that the

rumored “Black malaise” over the Biden presidency was overstated by the media heading into primary day.

This was certainly the case at the Royal Missionary Baptist Church in North Charleston, where the huge facility’s Family Life and Banquet Center was transformed into a polling place for the day.

“I just love that man and Jill Biden too,” Tomi “Thomasina” Greene said as she sat in a chair near the parking lot outside the polling station.

A volunteer with the Charleston County Democrat Party, Greene recalled meeting the then-future president in 2018, after she had been diagnosed with stage 4 cancer of the neck.

“His family, of course, has been touched by cancer and we connected because of that,” she said. “Since then he, and his lovely wife, Dr. Jill, have shown me nothing but kindness; they were there for me when I needed them, and you know, I’m just a lay person, an everyday person, not a head of government or anything like that.

“But these are truly genuine people, And when he makes a promise, he keeps it. So I just love him for who he is, and I think he’s doing a fantastic job in terms of being our president,” Greene said.

After pausing to greet neighbors heading in to vote, Greene continued.

“People talk about his age, but let me ask you, who else do you know that has the background that he does to do this job?” she said.

“What he has, in terms of ability, is what is needed right now, so I say, ‘Let him finish his assignment.’ History will tell the story. And when it does, it will say he was one of the best presidents we ever had. It will say he was the right man to bring us through a time of chaos,” Greene continued.

Asked why she used the word “assignment” to describe the president’s mission, Greene said, “because I believe he was ordained to do what he is doing. He suffered a lot in life and he worked hard to get where he’s at ... and this is the first time in a long while that there’s been true love in the White House. He and Jill work together on everything, as a unit.”

Two weeks ago, when Biden spoke at the historic Emanuel AME Church in downtown Charleston, it was Greene who confronted protesters who attempted to disrupt his remarks.

When the incident is mentioned, the 75-year-old smiles.

“I didn’t argue with them. To me it wasn’t a political moment, I just felt I had to get up and say, ‘This is a good man. You should listen to him before you criticize.’”

Asked why Biden seems to have such a connection with South Carolina’s Black community, Greene said “Because he listens.”

“I mean, he really listens. On a personal level. He makes eye contact. People feel his genuine interest in them as people,” she said. “The other thing is, they’ve made a point over the years of really getting to know this community.

“I mean, the first time I met Dr. Jill, I didn’t meet her at a five-star restaurant. I met her at Three Brothers Restaurant in North Charleston, in a part of town that might be considered ‘the ghetto,’ but she was there, she was actually there, getting to know the people and their concerns. You don’t forget that.”

“Good people,” she said finally. “Like I said, I love them dearly.”

A short distance away, another Biden supporter was leaving the polling place after casting her vote.

To Miss Nelson, as she identified herself, a vote for Biden wasn’t just a vote for a man, it was a vote for any kind of hope of bipartisanship in Washington.

“I think both parties ought to think about that,” she said.

“You
hear so
much
about,
‘Well,
we’re
going to

Dr. Elliot ‘preaching’ on the importance of doing one’s
civic duty on primary day. (Photo by Dan McCue)

overturn this as soon as we get in’ and ‘we’re going to overturn that’ but where does that get you ... because there’s new blood coming up every day saying the same thing about what you do.

“So we really need to work together and I believe Joe Biden is the candidate with the temperament to make that happen,” Nelson said.

Later, a woman identifying herself as Dr. Elliot said she turned out to vote because “we must do what we have to do.

“The beauty of this country is that you have an opportunity to make your voice known,” she said. “As far as I’m concerned, if you don’t vote, then you’ve got nothing to say about the outcome of an election. If you can’t get up and do your civic duty, well then, you just have to accept the consequences of things maybe not going your way.

“And what kind of example are you setting for young people, if you don’t get out and participate in the civic life of your country,” she said.

Asked if she sees the race for the White House now being strictly between Biden and former President Donald Trump — despite former S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley still actively seeking the nomination — Elliot thought for a moment, squinting against the South Carolina sunshine.

“Look,” she said. “Glory be to God. God is in control. But I will tell you this. Why would anyone let a criminal — and honestly speaking, Trump is a criminal, get back in that chair in the Oval Office?

“I mean, why?” she said, growing more impassioned. “The man is a stone criminal. He needs to be put behind bars. And you know why? Because he needs this lesson of a lifetime. He’s lived the life of a spoiled — not brat — of a spoiled old man, and it’s time now that that rascal be put behind bars. He needs to feel it.

“Trump is a demon,” she said. “He truly is a demon. And I hope that when Republicans gather to vote in a few weeks they wake up and realize this and support Miss [Nikki] Haley over Trump. “I’m a Biden supporter, but I’d much rather Trump pay the price

that's due and wind up behind bars, and Haley be the candidate for the other side."

A short distance away, Greene, who witnessed the exchange, rocked back in her chair laughing.

"She was preaching to you," she chuckled. "She sure was preaching to you."

"Like I told you, people look at Biden and see a man who has to complete his assignment. There are always things you can change, here and there. There are always reforms that are necessary, no matter how good or conscientious a president has been. But the time for that is not now," she said.

"I mean, I drove over here today on roads that have been beautifully repaired recently. That's Biden dollars out there. The student loan forgiveness, I think that was a good thing, because there are well-intentioned people out there who are struggling. And I could point to a number of other things he's done and say the same thing."

Greene then offered up a surprise. For all her talk and opinions, she admitted, "I'm not really about politics.

"It's all about love," she said. "I'd rather continue with a good thing."

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(All photos by Dan
McCue)

